

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

In 1969, I received my BA degree in Mass Communications from New Mexico State University. I was fortunate to have learned not only how to write and edit and make films, but also how to think critically about the role of the media and to develop an ethical foundation for the need for an informed public.

In the past decade, I have been very discouraged by the lack of public service exhibited by the increasinlgy powerful and rich media outlets, particularly the broadcast media. While I take the time to find other sources for my daily news and background information, many individuals have neither the inclination nor the time to go beyond what passes as "information" on the nightly news.

Democracy is dependent upon a citizenry informed about the political and electoral issues that affect our country and our specific locale. I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming and by the free use of a public resource for near-zero return to the public.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of one percent of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest of their own accord or to exercise any ethical approach to giving the public value for its resources, the FCC must step in and define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. These requirements must be substantive and reflective of the need for analyses of the ocmplex issues of our day - not just superficial gossip and sensationalism. These requirements should be established through dialog between the public, media scholars, and qualified media practitioners.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us. I would appreciate hearing how you plan to require accountability for a proper return on free use of public resources from this important component of our democracy.

Sincerely,

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